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A FEW PEDANTRIES IN CLASSICAL TEACHING.

THE ground on which this protest is based is the postulate that aspects of a subject which do not have educational value should not receive attention in preparatory school work. It is assumed that in the study of Greek and Latin nothing should be neglected which leads to a sure grasp of the principles of language, and that Greek and Latin furnish much etymological, historical, archæological, and æsthetic material which is useful in sharpening and furnishing the mind. Three things, however, which are common in the teaching of classics, seem to belong rather to the domain of the specialist than to that of the student of the humanities.

The first of these is the practice of requiring scholars beginning Latin to learn and mark hidden quantities. There is, possibly, little or no objection to the habitual marking of such quantities as help to an appreciative reading of Latin verse; but what good end is served by the pupil's attempt to remember that, for instance, *ūsq̄ue* and not *usque* is phonetically correct? Much time, first and last, must be consumed before these can be fixed in memory, and a conscientious teacher's task of correction is sensibly increased in the process; while the gain is something which may have an infinitesimal æsthetic value, but about which nobody cares except the philologist simply because such knowledge is specialists' knowledge, and does not involve culture of any sort.

The second fetish to which we are sacrificing the time of our pupils is the accentual system of writing and pronouncing Greek. It is admitted that we cannot reproduce the Greek tone-accent, and our false stress-accent must be abandoned as soon as Homer is reached. Why not, then, return to the old system of pronouncing Greek quantitatively, like Latin, retaining the written accent only in such words as *τῆς*, where its presence helps to distinguish like forms? It has been very cleverly maintained that the accent marks the intellectual element in a word. Without discussing this broad statement, it may be safely affirmed

that, saving the elect, this feature of the case does not often intrude itself upon a pupil's consciousness. The elect may, if they wish, easily acquaint themselves with this lore, and become mystagogues to a second generation of scholars; but to the average pupil the teacher who requires such knowledge must play the part of an apologist; and the apologist, even where the truth is concerned, has not the most desirable rôle in life.

Finally, what excuse can there be for compelling a student who understands Latin or Greek hexameter, for instance, and who can prove his mastery by the positive methods of rhythmical reading and of written scanning, to recite rules of prosody after that point of knowledge has been reached? And yet this is demanded by the admission requirements of at least one of the larger American colleges. There is much to be said for an examination requiring exact knowledge of *accidence* and syntax — Greek, Latin, or English. But can the same arguments be applied to prosody? Its rules may be useful as a means to an end, in the case of a pupil whose sense of rhythm is lacking; as we might formulate rules for the accent of words ending in *-ation* for a foreigner learning our speech; but when a student has proved by a sufficient test that he can read his Homer or Virgil without missing the music of their verse, should we ask more of him unless he is to become a special student of the classics?

This plea is made in the spirit of love for all that is best in Greek and Latin. The grounding in their principles should be sound and thorough if it is to be given at all; but the airs and graces of philology are neither necessary nor advisable accomplishments for the average man. Teachers can learn these things easily, as part of their professional training. One would not teach anatomy and pathology in the schools because elementary physiology finds an appropriate place there. The lore of hidden quantities and of the Greek accents and of rules of prosody can neither extend a man's horizon, nor enrich his culture, nor sharpen the edge of his thought. The classics are safe unless we bury sound scholarship beneath a dust-heap of technical learning.

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